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THE  
S P E E C H  
OF  
THE HONOURABLE  
*CHARLES JAMES FOX.*

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A NEW EDITION.

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S P E E C H  
OF  
THE HONOURABLE  
*76*  
**CHARLES JAMES FOX,**  
IN THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON  
*Monday, the 3d of February, 1800,*

ON A  
MOTION FOR AN ADDRESS TO THE THRONE,  
APPROVING OF THE REFUSAL OF MINISTERS  
TO TREAT WITH THE FRENCH REPUBLIC.

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A NEW EDITION.

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ST. JAMES'S PLACE

THE HONORABLE

CHARLES JAMES FOX



FOOTNOTES

Journal of the Society of Technicians, 1800

FOR AN ADDRESS TO THE THROSE

OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

EDWARD D. ...

London:  
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# S P E E C H

OF THE HONOURABLE

**CHARLES JAMES FOX.**

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Monday, February 3, 1800.

*Mr. Dundas moved the Address of Thanks to His Majesty. A Debate took place.*

*Mr. Fox rose, after the Right Honourable the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and spoke in substance as follows :*

MR. SPEAKER,

AT so late an hour of the night, I am sure you will do me the justice to believe that I do not mean to go at length into the discussion of this great question. Exhausted as the attention of the House must be, and unaccustomed as I have been of late to attend in my place, nothing but a deep sense of my duty could have induced me to trouble you at all, and particularly to request your indulgence at such an hour.

Sir, my honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erskine) has truly said, that the present is a new æra in the war. The right honourable gentleman opposite to me (Mr. Pitt) feels the justice of the remark ; for by travelling back to the com-

mencement of the war, and referring again to all the topics and arguments which he has so often and so successfully urged to the House, and by which he has drawn them on to the support of his measures, he is forced to acknowledge, that, at the end of a seven years conflict, we are come but to a new æra in the war, at which he thinks it necessary only to press all his former arguments to induce us to persevere. All the topics which have so often misled us—all the reasoning which has so invariably failed—all the lofty predictions which have so constantly been falsified by events—all the hopes which have amused the sanguine, and all the assurances of the distress and weakness of the enemy which have satisfied the unthinking, are again enumerated and advanced as arguments for our continuing the war. What! at the end of seven years of the most burthenfome and the most calamitous struggle that ever this country was engaged in, are we again to be amused with notions of finance and calculations of the exhausted resources of the enemy, as a ground of confidence and of hope? Gracious God! Were we not told, five years ago, that France was not only on the brink and in the jaws of ruin, but that she was actually sunk into the gulph of bankruptcy?—When we were told, as an unanswerable argument against treating, “that she could not hold out another campaign—that nothing but peace could save her—that she wanted only time to recruit her exhausted finances—that to grant her repose, was to grant her the means of again molesting this country, and that we had nothing to do but persevere for a short time, in order to save ourselves for ever from the consequences of her ambition and her Jacobinism!” What! after having gone on from year to year upon assurances like these, and after having seen the repeated refutations of every prediction, are we again to be gravely and seriously told, that we have the same prospect of success on the same identical grounds? And without any other argument or security, are we invited, at this new æra of the war, to carry on the war upon principles which, if adopted and acted upon, may make it eternal?—If the right honourable gentleman shall succeed in prevailing on Parliament, and the Country, to adopt the principles which he has advanced this night, I see no possible termination to the contest. No man can see an end to it; and upon the assurances and predictions



which have so uniformly failed, we are called upon, not merely to refuse all negotiation, but to countenance principles and views as distant from wisdom and justice, as they are in their nature wild and impracticable.

I must lament, Sir, in common with every genuine friend of peace, the harsh and unconciliating language which Ministers have held to the French, and which they have even made use of in their answer to a respectful offer of a negotiation. Such language has ever been considered as extremely unwise, and has ever been reprobated by diplomatic men. I remember with pleasure the terms in which Lord Malmesbury at Paris, in the year 1796, replied to expressions of this sort, used by M. de la Croix. He justly said, "that offensive and injurious insinuations were only calculated to throw new obstacles in the way of accommodation, and that it was not by revolting reproaches, nor by reciprocal invective, that a sincere wish to accomplish the great work of pacification could be evinced." Nothing could be more proper nor more wise than this language; and such ought ever to be the tone and conduct of men entrusted with the very important task of treating with an hostile nation. Being a sincere friend to peace, I must say with Lord Malmesbury, that it is not by reproaches and by invective that we can hope for a reconciliation; and I am convinced, in my own mind, that I speak the sense of this House, and, if not of this House, certainly of a majority of the people of this country, when I lament that any unprovoked and unnecessary recriminations should be flung out, by which obstacles are put in the way of pacification. I believe that it is the prevailing sentiment of the people, that we ought to abstain from harsh and from insulting language; and in common with them I must lament, that both in the papers of Lord Grenville, and this night, such licence has been given to invective and reproach. For the same reason, I must lament, that the right honourable gentleman has thought proper to go at such length, and with such severity of minute investigation, into all the early circumstances of the war, which, whatever they were, are nothing to the present purpose, and ought not to influence the present feelings of the House. I certainly shall not follow him into all the minute detail, though I do not agree with him in many of his asser-



tions. I do not know what impression his narrative may make on other gentlemen; but I will tell him, fairly and candidly, he has not convinced me. I continue to think, and until I see better grounds for changing my opinion than any that the right honourable gentleman has this night produced, I shall continue to think, and to say, plainly and explicitly, "that this country was the aggressor in the war." But with regard to Austria and Prussia—is there a man who, for one moment, can dispute that they were the aggressors? It will be vain for the right honourable gentleman to enter into long and plausible reasoning against the evidence of documents so clear, so decisive—so frequently, so thoroughly investigated. The unfortunate Monarch, Louis the Sixteenth, himself, as well as those who were in his confidence, have borne decisive testimony to the fact, that between him and the Emperor there was an intimate correspondence, and a perfect understanding. Do I mean by this that a positive treaty was entered into for the dismemberment of France? Certainly not; but no man can read the declarations which were made at Mantua, as well as at Pilnitz, as they are given by M. Bertrand de Molville, without acknowledging that this was not merely an intention, but a declaration of an intention, on the part of the great powers of Germany, to interfere in the internal affairs of France, for the purpose of regulating the Government, against the opinion of the people. This, though not a plan for the partition of France, was, in the eye of reason and common sense, an aggression against France. The right honourable gentleman denies that there was such a thing as a treaty of Pilnitz. Granted:—but was there not a declaration which amounted to an act of hostile aggression? The two powers, the Emperor of Germany and the King of Prussia, made a public declaration, that they were determined to employ their forces, in conjunction with those of the other Sovereigns of Europe, "to put the King of France in a situation to establish, in perfect liberty, the foundations of a Monarchical Government, equally agreeable to the rights of Sovereigns, and the welfare of the French." Whenever the other Princes should agree to co-operate with them, "then, and in that case, their Majesties were determined to act promptly, and by mutual consent, with the forces necessary to obtain the end proposed

by all of them. In the mean time they declared, that they would give orders for their troops to be ready for actual service." Now, I would ask gentlemen to lay their hands upon their hearts, and say with candour, what the true and fair construction of this declaration was—whether it was not a menace and an insult to France, since, in direct terms, it declared, that whenever the other powers should concur, they would attack France, then at peace with them, and then employed only in domestic and internal regulations? Let us suppose the case to be that of Great Britain—Will any gentleman say, that if two of the great powers should make a public declaration, that they were determined to make an attack on this kingdom as soon as circumstances should favour their intention; that they only waited for this occasion; and that in the mean time they would keep their forces ready for the purpose,—it would not be considered by the Parliament and People of this country as an hostile aggression? And is there any Englishman in existence, who is such a friend to peace as to say, that the nation could retain its honour and dignity if it should sit down under such a menace? I know too well what is due to the national character of England, to believe that there would be two opinions on the case, if thus put home to our own feelings and understanding. We must then respect in others the indignation which such an act would excite in ourselves; and when we see it established on the most indisputable testimony, that both at Pilnitz and at Maritua declarations were made to this effect, it is idle to say, that as far as the Emperor and the King of Prussia were concerned, they were not the aggressors in the war.

"Oh! but the decree of the 19th of November 1792,"—that, at least, the right honourable gentleman says, you must allow to be an act of aggression, not only against England, but against all the Sovereigns of Europe. I am not one of those, Sir, who attach much interest to the general and indiscriminate provocations thrown out at random, like this resolution of the 19th of November 1792. I do not think it necessary to the dignity of any people to notice and to apply to themselves menaces flung out without particular allusion, which are always unwise in the power which uses them, and which it is still more unwise to treat with seriousness. But if any such idle

and general provocation to nations is given, either in infolence or in folly, by any Government, it is a clear firſt principle, that an explanation is the thing which a magnanimous nation, feeling itſelf aggrieved, ought to demand; and if an explanation be given which is not ſatisfactory, it ought clearly and diſtinctly to ſay ſo. There ought to be no ambiguity, no reſerve, on the occaſion. Now, we all know, from documents on our table, that M. Chauvelin did give an explanation of this ſilly decree. He declared, “in the name of his Government, that it was never meant that the French Government ſhould favour inſurrections; that the decree was applicable only to thoſe people, who, after having acquired their liberty by conqueſt, ſhould demand the aſſiſtance of the Republic; but that France would reſpect, not only the independence of England, but alſo that of her allies with whom ſhe was not at war.” This was the explanation given of the offensive decree: “But this explanation was not ſatisfactory.” Did you ſay ſo to M. Chauvelin? Did you tell him that you were not content with this explanation? and when you diſmiſſed him, afterwards, on the death of the King, did you ſay that this explanation was unſatisfactory?—No; you did no ſuch thing: and I contend, that unleſs you demanded farther explanations, and they were reſuſed, you have no right to urge the decree of the 19th of November as an act of aggreſſion. In all your conferences and correſpondence with M. Chauvelin, did you hold out to him what terms would ſatisfy you? Did you give the French the power or the means of ſettling the miſunderſtanding which that decree, or any other of the points at iſſue, had created? I contend, that when a nation reſuſes to ſtate to another the thing which would ſatisfy her, ſhe ſhews that ſhe is not actuated by a deſire to preſerve peace between them; and I aver, that this was the caſe here. The Scheldt, for inſtance—you now ſay, that the navigation of the Scheldt was one of your cauſes of complaint. Did you explain yourſelf on that ſubject? Did you make it one of the grounds for the diſmiſſal of M. Chauvelin? Sir, I repeat it; a nation, to juſtify itſelf in appealing to the laſt ſolemn reſort, ought to prove that it had taken every poſſible means, conſiſtent with dignity, to demand the reparation and redreſs which would be ſatisfactory; and if ſhe reſuſed to explain



what would be satisfactory, she did not do her duty, nor exonerate herself from the charge of being the aggressor.

The right honourable gentleman has this night, for the first time, produced a most important paper—the instructions which were given to His Majesty's Minister at the Court of St. Petersburg, about the end of the year 1792, to interest Her Imperial Majesty to join her efforts with those of His Britannic Majesty, to prevent, by their joint mediation, the evils of a general war. Of this paper, and of the existence of any such document, I for one was entirely ignorant; but I have no hesitation in saying, that I completely approve of the instructions which appears to have been given; and I am sorry to see the right honourable gentleman disposed rather to take blame to himself than credit for having written it. He thinks that he shall be subject to the imputation of having been rather too slow to apprehend the dangers with which the French Revolution was fraught, than that he was forward and hasty—“*Quod solum excusat, hoc solum miror in illo.*” I do not agree with him on the idea of censure. I by no means think that he was blameable for too much confidence in the good intentions of the French. I think the tenor and composition of this paper was excellent—the instructions conveyed in it wise; and that it wanted but one essential thing to have entitled it to general approbation—namely, to be acted upon. The clear nature and intent of that paper, I take to be, that our Ministers were to solicit the Court of Petersburg to join with them in a declaration to the French Government, stating explicitly what course of conduct, with respect to their foreign relations, they thought necessary to the general peace and security of Europe, and what, if complied with, would have induced them to mediate for that purpose—A proper, wise, and legitimate course of proceeding. Now, I ask you, Sir, whether, if this paper had been communicated to Paris at the end of the year 1792, instead of Petersburg, it would not have been productive of most seasonable benefits to mankind; and, by informing the French in time of the means by which they might have secured the mediation of Great Britain, have not only avoided the rupture with this country, but have also restored general peace to the Continent? The paper, Sir, was excellent in its intentions; but it is



merit was all in the composition. It was a fine theory, which Ministers did not think proper to carry into practice. It was very much like what the right honourable gentleman at the head of the Board of Controul (Mr. Dundas) said some years ago, of the commercial system upon which we have maintained our Government in the East Indies: "Nothing could be more moral, more beautiful, and benevolent, than the instructions which were sent out to our Governors; but unfortunately those instructions had been confined to the registers of the Corporation; they were to be found only in the minute-books of Leadenhall Street—their beneficial effects had never been felt by the people, for whose protection and happiness the theories were framed." In the same manner, this very commendable paper, so well digested, and so likely to preserve us from the calamities of war, was never communicated to the French; never acted upon, never known to the world until this day; nay, on the contrary, at the very time that Ministers had drawn up this paper, they were insulting M. Chauvelin, in every way, until about the 23d or 24th of January 1793, when they finally dismissed him, without stating any one ground upon which they were willing to preserve terms with the French.

"But France," it seems, "then declared war against us; and she was the aggressor, because the declaration came from her."—Let us look at the circumstances of this transaction on both sides. Undoubtedly the declaration was made by them; but is a declaration the only thing which constitutes the commencement of a war? Do gentlemen recollect, that, in consequence of a dispute about the commencement of war, respecting the capture of a number of ships, an article was inserted in our treaty with France, by which it was positively stipulated, that in future, to prevent all disputes, the act of the dismissal of a Minister from either of the two Courts, should be held and considered as tantamount to a declaration of war? I mention this, Sir, because when we are idly employed in this retrospect of the origin of a war which has lasted so many years, instead of fixing our eyes only to the contemplation of the means of putting an end to it, we seem disposed to overlook every thing on our own parts, and to search only for grounds of imputation on the enemy. I almost think it an

insult on the House to detain them with this sort of examination. Why, Sir, if France was the aggressor, as the right honourable gentleman says she was throughout—why did not Prussia call upon us for the stipulated number of troops, according to the article of the defensive treaty of alliance subsisting between us, by which, in case that either of the contracting parties was attacked, they had a right to demand the stipulated aid? and the same thing again may be asked when we were attacked. The right honourable gentleman might here accuse himself, indeed, of reserve; but it unfortunately happened, that at the time the point was too clear on which side the aggression lay. Prussia was too sensible that the war could not entitle her to make the demand, and that it was not a case within the scope of the defensive treaty. This is evidence worth a volume of subsequent reasoning; for if, at the time when all the facts were present to their minds, they could not take advantage of existing treaties, and that too when the Courts were on the most friendly terms with one another, it will be manifest to every thinking man that they were sensible they were not authorised to make the demand.

I really, Sir, cannot think it necessary to follow the right honourable gentleman into all the minute details which he has thought proper to give us respecting the first aggression; but that Austria and Prussia were the aggressors, not a man in any country, who has ever given himself the trouble to think at all on the subject, can doubt. Nothing could be more hostile than their whole proceedings. Did they not declare to France, that it was their internal concerns, not their external proceedings, which provoked them to confederate against her. Look back to the proclamations with which they set out—Read the declarations which they made themselves, to justify their appeal to arms—They did not pretend to fear their ambition—their conquests—their troubling their neighbours; but they accused them of new-modelling their own Government. They said nothing of their aggressions abroad; they spoke only of their clubs and societies at Paris.

Sir, in all this, I am not justifying the French—I am not striving to absolve them from blame—either in their internal or external policy. I think, on the contrary, that their successive Rulers have been as bad and as execrable in various in-

stances, as any of the most despotic and unprincipled Governments that the world ever saw. I think it impossible, Sir, that it should have been otherwise. It was not to be expected that the French, when once engaged in foreign wars, should not endeavour to spread destruction around them, and to form plans of aggrandizement and plunder on every side. Men bred in the school of the House of Bourbon could not be expected to act otherwise. They could not have lived so long under their antient masters, without imbibing the restless ambition, the perfidy, and the insatiable spirit of the race. They have imitated the practice of their great prototype, and, through their whole career of mischief and of crimes, have done no more than servilely trace the steps of their own Louis XIV. If they have over-run countries, and ravaged them, they have done it upon Bourbon principles. If they have ruined and dethroned Sovereigns, it is entirely after the Bourbon manner.—If they have even fraternized with the people of foreign countries, and pretended to make their cause their own, they have only faithfully followed the Bourbon example. They have constantly had Louis, the grand Monarque, in their eye. But it may be said, that this example was long ago, and that we ought not to refer to a period so distant. True, it is a distant period applied to the man, but not so of the principle. The principle was never extinct; nor has its operation been suspended in France, except, perhaps, for a short interval, during the administration of Cardinal Fleury; and my complaint against the Republic of France is, not that she has generated new crimes—not that she has promulgated new mischief—but that she has adopted and acted upon the principles which have been so fatal to Europe, under the practice of the House of Bourbon. It is said, that wherever the French have gone, they have introduced Revolution—they have sought for the means of disturbing neighbouring States, and have not been content with mere conquest. What is this but adopting the ingenious scheme of Louis XIV? He was not content with merely over-running a State;—whenever he came into a new territory, he established what he called his Chamber of Claims; a most convenient device, by which he inquired, whether the conquered country or province had any dormant or disputed claims—any cause of complaint—any



unsettled demand upon any other State or Province—upon which he might wage war upon such State, thereby discover again ground for new devastation, and gratify his ambition by new acquisitions. What have the Republicans done more atrocious, more Jacobinical, than this? Louis went to war with Holland—His pretext was, that Holland had not treated him with sufficient respect;—a very just and proper cause for war indeed. This, Sir, leads me to an example which I think seasonable, and worthy the attention of His Majesty's Ministers. When our Charles II. as a short exception to the policy of his reign, made the triple alliance for the protection of Europe, and particularly of Holland, against the ambition of Louis XIV. what was the conduct of that great, virtuous, and most able Statesman, M. de Witt, when the confederates came to deliberate on the terms upon which they should treat with the French Monarch? When it was said that he had made unprincipled conquests, and that he ought to be forced to surrender them all, what was the language of that great and wise man? "No," said he; "I think we ought not to look back to the origin of the war, so much as the means of putting an end to it. If you had united in time to prevent these conquests, well; but, now that he has made them, he stands upon the ground of conquest, and we must agree to treat with him, not with reference to the origin of the conquest, but with regard to his present posture. He has those places, and some of them we must be content to give up as the means of peace—for conquest will always successfully set up its claims to indemnification." Such was the language of this Minister, who was the ornament of his time; and such, in my mind, ought to be the language of Statesmen, with regard to the French, at this day; and the same ought to have been said at the formation of the Confederacy. It was true that the French had over-run Savoy; but they had over-run it upon Bourbon principles; and having gained this and other conquests before the Confederacy was formed, they ought to have treated with her rather for future security, than for past correction. States in possession, whether Monarchical or Republican, will claim indemnity in proportion to their success; and it will never so much be inquired by what right they gained possession, as by what means they



can be prevented from enlarging their depredations. Such is the safe practice of the world ; and such ought to have been the conduct of the powers when the reduction of Savoy made them coalesce. The right honourable gentleman may know more of the secret particulars of their over-running Savoy than I do ; but certainly, as they have come to my knowledge, it was a most Bourbon-like act. A great and justly celebrated historian, whom I will not call a foreigner—I mean Mr. Hume (a writer, certainly, estimable in many particulars, but who is a childish lover of Princes)—talks of Louis XIV. in very magnificent terms ; but he says of him, that, though he managed his enterprizes with skill and bravery, he was unfortunate in this, that he never got a good and fair pretence for war. This he reckons among his misfortunes ! Can we say more of the Republican French ? In seizing on Savoy, I think they made use of the words, “ *convenances morales et physiques.* ” These were her reasons. A most Bourbon-like phrase ! And I therefore contend, that as we never scrupled to treat with the Princes of the House of Bourbon on account of their rapacity, their thirst of conquest, their violation of treaties, their perfidy, and their restless spirit ; so, I contend, we ought not to refuse to treat with their Republican imitators.

Ministers could not pretend ignorance of the unprincipled manner in which the French had seized on Savoy. The Sardinian Minister complained of the aggression, and yet no stir was made about it. The Courts of Europe stood by, and saw the outrage ; and our Ministers saw it. The right honourable gentleman will in vain, therefore, exert his powers to persuade me of the interest he takes in the preservation of the rights of nations, since, at the moment when an interference might have been made with effect, no step was taken, no remonstrance made, no mediation negotiated, to stop the career of conquest. All the pretended and hypocritical sensibility “ for the rights of nations, and for social order,” with which we have since been flattered, cannot impose upon those who will take the trouble to look back to the period when this sensibility ought to have roused us into seasonable exertion. At that time, however, the right honourable gentleman makes it his boast, that he was prevented, by a sense of neutrality, from

taking any measures of precaution on the subject. I do not give the right honourable gentleman much credit for his spirit of neutrality on the occasion. It flowed from the sense of the country at the time, the great majority of which was clearly and decidedly against all interruptions being given to the French in their desire of regulating their own internal Government.

But this neutrality, which respected only the internal rights of the French, and from which the people of England would never have departed but for the impolitic and hypocritical cant which was set up to arouse their jealousy and alarm their fears, was very different from the great principle of political prudence which ought to have actuated the Councils of the nation, on seeing the first steps of France towards a career of external conquest. My opinion is, that when the unfortunate King of France offered to us, in the letter delivered by M. Chauvelin and M. Talleyrand, and even intreated us to mediate between him and the allied powers of Austria and Prussia, they ought to have accepted of the offer, and exerted their influence to save Europe from the consequence of a system which was then beginning to manifest itself. It was, at least, a question of prudence ; and as we had never refused to treat and to mediate with the old Princes on account of their ambition or their perfidy, we ought to have been equally ready now, when the same principles were acted upon by other men. I must doubt the sensibility which could be so cold and so indifferent at the proper moment for its activity. I fear that there were at that moment the germs of ambition rising in the mind of the right honourable gentleman, and that he was beginning, like others, to entertain hopes that something might be obtained out of the coming confusion. What but such a sentiment could have prevented him from overlooking the fair occasion that was offered for preventing the calamities with which Europe was threatened ? What but some such interested principle could have made him forego the truly honourable task, by which his administration would have displayed its magnanimity and its power ? But for some such feeling, would not this country, both in wisdom and in dignity, have interfered, and, in conjunction with the other powers, have said to France, " You ask for a mediation ;

we will mediate with candour and sincerity, but we will at the same time declare to you our apprehensions. We do not trust to your assertion of a determination to avoid all foreign conquest, and that you are desirous only of settling your own Constitution, because your language is contradicted by experience and the evidence of facts. You are Frenchmen, and you cannot so soon have forgotten and thrown off the Bourbon principles in which you were educated. You have already imitated the bad practice of your Princes; you have seized on Savoy without a colour of right.—But here we take our stand. Thus far you have gone, and we cannot help it; but you must go no farther. We will tell you distinctly what we shall consider as an attack on the balance and the security of Europe; and, as the condition of our interference, we will tell you also the securities that we think essential to the general repose.” This ought to have been the language of His Majesty’s Ministers when their mediation was solicited; and something of this kind they evidently thought of when they sent the instructions to Petersburg which they have mentioned this night, but upon which they never acted. Having not done so, I say, they have no right to talk now about the violated rights of Europe—about the aggression of the French—and about the origin of the war, in which this country was so suddenly afterwards plunged. Instead of this, what did they do? They hung back; they avoided explanation; they gave the French no means of satisfying them; and I repeat my proposition—when there is a question of peace and war between two nations, that Government feels itself in the wrong which refuses to state with clearness and precision what she should consider as a satisfaction and a pledge of peace.

Sir, if I understand the true precepts of the Christian religion, as set forth in the New Testament, I must be permitted to say, that there is no such thing as a rule or doctrine by which we are directed, or can be justified, in waging a war for religion. The idea is subversive of the very foundations upon which it stands, which are those of peace and good-will among men. Religion never was, and never can be, a justifiable cause of war; but it has been too often grossly used as the pretext and the apology for the most unprincipled wars.



I have already said, and I repeat it, that the conduct of the French to foreign nations cannot be justified. They have given great cause of offence, but certainly not to all countries alike. The right honourable gentlemen opposite to me have made an indiscriminate catalogue of all the countries which the French have offended, and, in their eagerness to throw odium on the nation, have taken no pains to investigate the sources of their several quarrels. I will not detain you, Sir, by entering into the long detail which has been given of their aggressions and their violences; but let me mention Sardinia as one instance which has been strongly insisted upon. Did the French attack Sardinia when at peace with them? No such thing. The King of Sardinia had accepted of a subsidy from Great Britain; and Sardinia was, to all intents and purposes, a belligerent power. Several other instances might be mentioned; but though, perhaps, in the majority of instances, the French may be unjustifiable, is this the moment for us to dwell upon these enormities—to waste our time, and inflame our passions, by criminating and recriminating upon each other? There is no end to such a war. I have somewhere read, I think in Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World, of a most bloody and fatal battle which was fought by two opposite armies, in which almost all the combatants on both sides were killed, "because," says the historian, "though they had offensive weapons on both sides, they had none for defence." So, in this war of words, if we are to use only offensive weapons—if we are to indulge only in invective and abuse, the contest must be eternal.

If this war of reproach and invective is to be countenanced, may not the French with equal reason complain of the outrages and the horrors committed by the powers opposed to them? If we must not treat with the French on account of the iniquity of their former transactions, ought we not to be as scrupulous of connecting ourselves with other powers equally criminal? Surely, Sir, if we must be thus rigid in scrutinizing the conduct of an enemy, we ought to be equally careful in not committing ourselves, our honour, and our safety, with an ally, who has manifested the same want of respect for the rights of other nations. Surely, if it is material to know the character of a power with whom you are about only



to treat for peace ; it is more material to know the character of allies, with whom you are about to enter into the closest connection of friendship, and for whose exertions you are about to pay. Now, Sir, what was the conduct of your own allies to Poland ? Is there a single atrocity of the French, in Italy, in Switzerland, in Egypt if you please, more unprincipled and inhuman, than that of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, in Poland ? What has there been in the conduct of the French to foreign powers ; what in the violation of solemn treaties ; what in the plunder, devastation, and dismemberment of unoffending countries ; what in the horrors and murders perpetrated upon the subdued victims of their rage in any district which they have over-run, worse than the conduct of those three great powers, in the miserable, devoted, and trampled-on kingdom of Poland, and who have been, or are, our allies in this war for religion and social order, and the rights of nations ? “ Oh ! but you *regretted* the partition of Poland ! ” Yes, *regretted* ! you *regretted* the violence, and that is all you did. You united yourselves with the actors ; you, in fact, by your acquiescence, confirmed the atrocity. But they are your allies ; and though they over-run and divided Poland, there was nothing, perhaps, in the *manner* of doing it, which stamped it with peculiar infamy and disgrace. The hero of Poland, perhaps, was merciful and mild ! He was “ as much superior to Bonaparte in bravery, and in the “ discipline which he maintained, as he was superior in “ virtue and humanity ! ” He was animated by the purest principles of Christianity, and was restrained in his career by the benevolent precepts which it inculcates ! Was he ? Let unfortunate Warsaw, and the miserable inhabitants of the suburb of Praga in particular, tell ! What do we understand to have been the conduct of this magnanimous hero, with whom, it seems, Bonaparte is not to be compared ? He entered the suburb of Praga, the most populous suburb of Warsaw ; and there he let his soldiery loose on the miserable, unarmed and unresisting people. Men, women, and children, nay, infants at the breast, were doomed to one indiscriminate massacre ! Thousands of them were inhumanly, wantonly butchered ! And for what ? Because they had dared to join in a wish to meliorate their own condition as a people,

and to improve their Constitution, which had been confessed by their own Sovereign to be in want of amendment. And such is the hero upon whom the cause of religion and social order is to repose ! And such is the man whom we praise for his discipline and his virtue, and whom we hold out as our boast and our dependence ; while the conduct of Bonaparte unfits him to be even treated with as an enemy !

But the behaviour of the French towards Switzerland raises all the indignation of the right honourable gentleman, and inflames his eloquence. I admire the indignation which he expresses (and I think he felt it) in speaking of this country, so dear and so congenial to every man who loves the sacred name of Liberty. He who loves Liberty, says the right honourable gentleman, thought himself at home on the favoured and happy mountains of Switzerland, where she seemed to have taken up her abode under a sort of implied compact, among all other States, that she should not be disturbed in this her chosen asylum. I admire the eloquence of the right honourable gentleman in speaking of this country, of liberty and peace, to which every man would desire, once in his life at least, to make a pilgrimage ! But who, let me ask him, first proposed to the Swiss people to depart from the neutrality, which was their chief protection, and to join the confederacy against the French ? I aver, that a noble relation of mine (Lord Robert Fitzgerald), then the Minister of England to the Swiss Cantons, was instructed, in direct terms, to propose to the Swiss, by an official note, to break from the safe line they had laid down for themselves, and to tell them, " in such a contest neutrality was criminal. "—I know that noble Lord too well, though I have not been in habits of intercourse with him of late, from the employments in which he has been engaged, to suspect that he would have presented such a paper without the express instructions of his Court, or that he would have gone beyond those instructions.

But was it only to Switzerland that this sort of language was held ? What was our language also to Tuscany and to Genoa ? An honourable gentleman (Mr. Canning) has denied the authenticity of a pretended letter which has been circulated, and ascribed to Lord Harvey. He says, it is all a fable and a forgery. Be it so ; but is it also a fable that

Lord Harvey did speak in terms to the Grand Duke, which he considered as offensive and insulting? I cannot tell, for I was not present; but was it not, and is it not believed? Is it a fable that Lord Harvey went into the closet of the Grand Duke, laid his watch upon the table, and demanded, in a peremptory manner, that he should, within a certain number of minutes, I think I have heard, within a quarter of an hour, determine, aye or no, to dismiss the French Minister, and order him out of his dominions; with the menace, that if he did not, the English fleet should bombard Leghorn? Will the honourable gentleman deny this also? I certainly do not know it from my own knowledge; but I know, that persons of the first credit, then at Florence, have stated these facts, and that they have never been contradicted. It is true, that upon the Grand Duke's complaint of this indignity, Lord Harvey was recalled; but was the principle recalled? was the mission recalled? Did not Ministers persist in the demand which Lord Harvey had made, perhaps ungraciously? and was not the Grand Duke forced, in consequence, to dismiss the French Minister? and did they not drive him to enter into an unwilling war with the Republic? It is true that he afterwards made his peace; and that, having done so, he was treated severely and unjustly by the French: but what do I conclude from all this, but that we have no right to be scrupulous, we who have violated the respect due to peaceable powers ourselves, in this war, which, more than any other that ever afflicted human nature, has been distinguished by the greatest number of disgusting and outrageous insults to the smaller powers by the great—And I infer from this also, that the instances not being confined to the French, but having been perpetrated by every one of the allies, and by England as much as by others, we have no right, either in personal character, or from our own deportment, to refuse to treat with the French on this ground.—Need I speak of your conduct to Genoa also? Perhaps the note delivered by Mr. Drake was also a forgery. Perhaps the blockade of the port never took place. It is impossible to deny the facts, which were so glaring at the time. It is a painful thing to me, Sir, to be obliged to go back to these unfortunate periods of the history of this war, and of the conduct of this country; but I



am forced to the task by the use which has been made of the atrocities of the French as an argument against negotiation. I think I have said enough to prove, that if the French have been guilty, we have not been innocent. Nothing but determined incredulity can make us deaf and blind to our own acts, when we are so ready to yield an assent to all the reproaches which are thrown out on the enemy, and upon which reproaches we are gravely told to continue the war.

"But the French," it seems, "have behaved ill every where. They seized on Venice, which had preserved the most exact neutrality, or rather" as it is hinted, "had manifested symptoms of friendship to them." I agree with the right honourable gentleman, it was an abominable act. I am not the apologist of, much less the advocate for their iniquities; neither will I countenance them in their pretences for the injustice. I do not think that much regard is to be paid to the charges which a triumphant soldiery bring on the conduct of a people whom they have over-run. Pretences for outrage will never be wanting to the strong, when they wish to trample on the weak; but when we accuse the French of having seized on Venice, after stipulating for its neutrality, and guaranteeing its independence, we should also remember the excuse that they made for the violence—namely, that their troops had been attacked and murdered. I say I am always incredulous about such excuses; but I think it fair to hear whatever can be alledged on the other side. We cannot take one side of a story only. Candour demands that we should examine the whole before we make up our minds on the guilt. I cannot think it quite fair to state the view of the subject of one party as indisputable fact, without even mentioning what the other party has to say for itself. But, Sir, is this all? Though the perfidy of the French to the Venetians be clear and palpable, was it worse in morals, in principle, and in example, than the conduct of Austria? My honourable friend (Mr. Whitbread) properly asked, "Is not the receiver as bad as the thief?" If the French seized on the territory of Venice, did not the Austrians agree to receive it? "But this," it seems, "is not the same thing." It is quite in the nature, and within the rule of diplomatic morality, for Austria to receive the country which was thus seized upon

unjustly. "The Emperor took it as a compensation; it was his by barter; he was not answerable for the guilt by which it was obtained." What is this, Sir, but the false and abominable reasoning with which we have been so often disgusted on the subject of the slave trade? Just in the same manner have I heard a notorious wholesale dealer in this inhuman traffic, justify his abominable trade. "I am not guilty of the horrible crime of tearing that mother from her infants; that husband from his wife; of depopulating that village; of depriving that family of their sons, the support of their aged parents!—No; thank Heaven! I am not guilty of this horror; I only bought them in the fair way of trade. They were brought to the market; they had been guilty of crimes, or they had been made prisoners in war; they were accused of witchcraft, of obi, or of some other sort of sorcery; and they were brought to me for sale; I gave a valuable consideration for them; but God forbid that I should have stained my soul with the guilt of dragging them from their friends and families!" Such has been the precious defence of the slave trade; and such is the argument set up for Austria, in this instance of Venice. "I did not commit the crime of trampling on the independence of Venice. I did not seize on the city; I gave a *quid pro quo*. It was a matter of barter and indemnity; I gave half a million of human beings to be put under the yoke of France in another district, and I had these people turned over to me in return!" This, Sir, is the defence of Austria; and under such detestable sophistry as this, is the infernal traffic in human flesh, whether in white or black, to be continued, and even justified! At no time has that diabolical traffic been carried to a greater length than during the present war; and that by England herself, as well as Austria and Russia.

"But France," it seems, "has roused all the nations of Europe against her;" and the long catalogue has been read to you, to prove that she must have been atrocious to provoke them all. Is it true, Sir, that she has roused them all? It does not say much for the address of His Majesty's Ministers, if this be the case. What, Sir! have all your negotiations, all your declamation, all your money, been squandered in vain? Have you not succeeded in stirring the indignation, and en-

gaging the assistance, of a single power? But you do yourselves injustice. I dare say the truth lies between you—Between their crimes and your money the rage has been excited; and full as much is due to your seductions, as to her atrocities. My honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erskine) was correct, therefore, in his argument; for you cannot take both sides of the case: you cannot accuse them of having provoked all Europe, and at the same time claim the merit of having roused them to join you.

You talk of your allies. Sir, I wish to know who your allies are? Russia is one of them, I suppose. Did France attack Russia? Has the magnanimous Paul taken the field for social order and religion, on account of personal aggression? The Emperor of Russia has declared himself Grand Master of Malta, though his religion is as opposite to that of the Knights, as ours is; and he is as much considered an heretic by the church of Rome, as we are. The King of Great Britain might, with as much reason and propriety, declare himself the head of the order of the Chartreuse Monks; for he, as well as we, were considered as heretics by the Pope. Not content with taking to himself the commandery of this institution of Malta, Paul has even created a married man a knight, contrary to all the most sacred rules and regulations of the order. And yet this ally of ours is fighting for religion!—So much for his religion: Let us see his regard to social order! How does he shew his abhorrence of the principles of the French, in their violation of the rights of other nations? What has been his conduct to Denmark? He says to Denmark—"You have seditious clubs at Copenhagen—No Danish vessel shall enter the ports of Russia!" He holds a still more despotic language to Hamburgh. He threatens to lay an embargo on their trade; and he forces them to surrender up men who are claimed by the French as their citizens—whether truly or not, I do not inquire. He threatens them with his own vengeance if they refuse, and subjects them to that of the French if they comply. And what has been his conduct to Spain? He first sends away the Spanish minister from Petersburg, and then complains, as a great insult, that his minister was dismissed from Madrid!—This is one of our allies; and he has declared that the object for which he has taken up arms, is to replace the antient race of



the House of Bourbon on the Throne of France, and that he does this for the cause of religion and social order! Such is the respect for religion and social order which he himself displays; and such are the examples of it with which we coalesce!

No man regrets, Sir, more than I do, the enormities that France has committed; but how do they bear upon the question as it now stands? Are we for ever to deprive ourselves of the benefits of peace, because France has perpetrated acts of injustice? Sir, we cannot acquit ourselves upon such ground. We have negotiated. With the knowledge of these acts of injustice and disorder, we have treated with them twice; yet the right honourable gentleman cannot enter into negotiation with them now; and it is worth while to attend to the reasons that he gives for refusing their offer. The Revolution itself is no more an objection now, than it was in the year 1796, when he did negotiate; for the Government of France at that time was surely as unstable as it is now. The crimes of the French, the instability of their government, did not then prevent him; and why are they to prevent him now? He negotiated with a government as unstable, and, baffled in that negotiation, he did not scruple to open another at Lisle in the year 1797. We have heard a very curious account of these negotiations this day, and, as the right honourable gentleman has emphatically told us, an *honest* account of them. He says he has no scruple in avowing that he apprehended danger from the success of his own efforts to procure a pacification, and that he was not displeased at its failure. He was sincere in his endeavours to treat, but he was not disappointed when they failed. I wish to understand the right honourable gentleman correctly—His declaration on the subject, then, I take to be this—that though sincere in his endeavours to procure peace in 1797, yet he apprehended greater danger from accomplishing his object, than from the continuance of war; and that he felt this apprehension from the comparative views of the probable state of peace and war at that time. I hope I state the right honourable gentleman correctly. I have no hesitation in allowing the fact, that a state of peace, immediately after a war of such violence, must, in some respects, be a state of insecurity; but does this not belong, in a certain degree, to all wars? And are

we never to have peace, because that peace may be insecure ? But there was something, it seems, so peculiar in this war, and in the character and principles of the enemy, that the right honourable gentleman thought a peace in 1797 would be comparatively more dangerous than war. Why then did he treat ? I beg the attention of the House to this—He treated, “because the unequivocal sense of the people of England was declared to be in favour of a negotiation.” The right honourable gentleman confesses the truth, then, that in 1797 the people were for peace. I thought so at the time ; but you all recollect, that when I stated it in my place, it was denied : —“ True,” they said, “ you have procured petitions ; but we have petitions too—we all know in what strange ways petitions may be procured, and how little they deserve to be considered as the sense of the people.” This was their language at the time ; but now we find these petitions did speak the sense of the people, and that it was, on this side of the House, only, the sense of the people was spoken : The majority spoke a contrary language ! It is acknowledged then, that the unequivocal sense of the people of England may be spoken by the minority of this House, and that it is not always by the test of numbers that an honest decision is to be ascertained. This House decided against what the right honourable gentleman knew to be the sense of the country ; but he himself acted upon that sense against the vote of Parliament.

The negotiation in 1796 went off, as my honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erskine) has said, upon the question of Belgium ; or, as the right honourable gentleman asserts, upon a question of principle. He negotiated to please the people, but it went off “on account of a monstrous principle advanced by France, incompatible with all negotiation.” This is now said. Did the right honourable gentleman say so at the time ? Did he fairly and candidly inform the people of England, that they broke off the negotiation because the French had urged a basis that it was totally impossible for England at any time to grant ? No such thing. On the contrary, when the negotiation broke off, they published a manifesto, “renewing, in the face of Europe, the solemn declaration, that whenever the enemy should be disposed to enter on the work of a general pacification, in a spirit of conciliation and equity,

nothing should be wanting on their part to contribute to the accomplishment of that great object."—And accordingly, in the year 1797, notwithstanding this incompatible principle, and with all the enormities of the French on their heads, they opened a new negotiation at Lisle. They do not wait for any retraction of this incompatible principle; they do not wait even till overtures shall be made to them; but they solicit and renew a negotiation themselves. I do not blame them for this, Sir; I say only that it is an argument against the assertion of an incompatible principle. It is a proof that they did not then think as the right honourable gentleman now says they thought; but that they yielded to the sentiments of the nation, who were generally inclined to peace, against their own judgment; and, from a motive which I shall come to by and by, they had no hesitation, on account of the first rupture, to renew the negotiation—it was renewed at Lisle; and this the French broke off, after the revolution at Paris on the 4th of September. What was the conduct of Ministers upon this occasion? One would have thought, that, with the fresh insult at Lisle in their minds, with the recollection of their failure the year before at Paris, if it had been true that they found an incompatible principle, they would have talked a warlike language, and would have announced to their country and to all Europe, that peace was not to be obtained; that they must throw away the scabbard, and think only of the means of continuing the contest—No such thing. They put forth a declaration, in which they said, that they should look with anxious expectation for the moment when the Government of France should shew a disposition and spirit corresponding with their own; and renewing before all Europe the solemn declaration, that at the very moment when the brilliant victory of Lord Duncan might have justified them to demand more extravagant terms, they were willing, if the calamities of war could be closed, to conclude peace on the same moderate and equitable principles and terms which they had before proposed. Such was their declaration upon that occasion; and in the discussions which we had upon it in this House, Ministers were explicit. They said, that by that negotiation, there had been given to the world what might be regarded as an unequivocal test of the sincerity and disposition of a govern-



ment towards peace, or against it ; for those who refuse discussion, shew that they are disinclined to pacification ; and it is therefore, they said, always to be considered as a test, that the party who refuses to negotiate, is the party who is disinclined to peace. This they themselves set up as the test. Try them now, Sir, by that test. An offer is made them. They rashly, and I think rudely, refuse it. Have they, or have they not, broken their own test ?

But, they say, " they have not refused all discussion." They have put a case. They have expressed a wish for the restoration of the House of Bourbon, and have declared that to be an event which would immediately remove every obstacle to negotiation. Sir, as to the restoration of the House of Bourbon, if it shall be the wish of the people of France, I for one shall be perfectly content to acquiesce. I think the people of France, as well as every other people, ought to have the Government which they like best themselves ; and the form of that Government, or the persons who hold it in their hands, should never be an obstacle with me to treat with the nation for peace, or to live with them in amity—But as an Englishman, Sir, and actuated by English feelings, I surely cannot wish for the restoration of the House of Bourbon to the Throne of France. I hope that I am not a man to bear heavily upon any unfortunate family. I feel for their situation—I respect their distresses—But as a friend of England, I cannot wish for their restoration to the power which they abused. I cannot forget that the whole history of the century is little more than an account of the wars and the calamities arising from the restless ambition, the intrigues, and the perfidy of the House of Bourbon.

I cannot discover, in any part of the laboured defence which has been set up for not accepting the offer now made by France, any argument to satisfy my mind that Ministers have not forfeited the test which they held out as infallible in 1797. An honourable gentleman (Mr. Canning) thinks that Parliament should be eager only to approach the Throne with declarations of their readiness and resolution to support His Majesty in the farther prosecution of the war without inquiry ; and he is quite delighted with an address, which he has found upon the Journals, to King William, in which

they pledged themselves to support him in his efforts to resist the ambition of Louis XIV. He thinks it quite astonishing how much it is in point, and how perfectly it applies to the present occasion. One would have thought, Sir, that in order to prove the application, he would have shewn that an offer had been respectfully made by the Grand Monarch to King William, to treat, which he had peremptorily, and in very irritating terms, refused; and that, upon this, the House of Commons had come forward, and, with one voice, declared their determination to stand by him, with their lives and fortunes, in prosecuting the just and necessary war. Not a word of all this; and yet the honourable gentleman finds it quite a parallel case, and an exact model for the House, on this day, to pursue. I really think, Sir, he might as well have taken any other address upon the Journals, upon any other topic, as this address to King William.—It would have been equally in point, and would have equally served to shew the honourable gentleman's talent for reasoning.

Sir, I cannot here overlook another instance of this honourable gentleman's candid stile of debating, and of his respect for Parliament. He has found out, it seems, that in former periods of our history, and even in periods which have been denominated good times, intercepted letters have been published; and he reads, from the Gazette, instances of such publication. Really, Sir, if the honourable gentleman had pursued the profession to which he turned his thoughts when younger, he would have learnt that it was necessary to find cases a little more in point. And yet, full of his triumph on this notable discovery, he has chosen to indulge himself in speaking of a most respectable and a most honourable person as any that this country knows, and who is possessed of as sound an understanding as any man that I have the good fortune to be acquainted with, in terms the most offensive and disgusting, on account of words which he may be supposed to have said in another place, [alluding to the Duke of Bedford's speech in the House of Lords.] He has spoken of that noble person, and of his intellect, in terms which, were I disposed to retort, I might say, shew himself to be possessed of an intellect which would justify me in passing over in silence any thing that comes from such a man. Sir, the noble person

did not speak of the mere act of publishing the intercepted correspondence; and the honourable gentleman's reference to the Gazettes of former periods is, therefore, not in point. The noble Duke complained of the manner in which these intercepted letters had been published, not of the fact itself of their publication; for, in the introduction and notes to those letters, the *ribaldry* is such, that they are not screened from the execration of every honourable mind even by their extreme stupidity. The honourable gentleman says, that he must treat with indifference the intellect of a man who can ascribe the present scarcity of corn to the war. Sir, I think there is nothing either absurd or unjust in such an opinion. Does not the war, necessarily, by its magazines, and still more by its expeditions, increase consumption? But when we learn that corn is, at this very moment, sold in France for less than half the price which it bears here, is it not a fair thing to suppose, that, but for the war, and its prohibitions, a part of that grain would be brought to this country, on account of the high price which it would sell for, and that, consequently, our scarcity would be relieved from their abundance? I speak only upon report, of course; but I see that the prices quoted in the French markets is less, by one half, than the prices in England. There was nothing, therefore, very absurd in what fell from the noble person; and I would really advise the honourable gentleman, when he speaks of persons distinguished for every virtue, to be a little more guarded in his language. I see no reason why he and his friends should not leave, to persons in another place, holding the same opinions as themselves, the task of answering what may be thrown out there. Is not the phalanx sufficient? It is no great compliment to their talents, considering their number, that they cannot be left to the task of answering the few to whom they are opposed; but, perhaps, the honourable gentleman has too little to do in this House, and he is to be sent there himself. In truth, I see no reason why even he might not be sent, as well as some others who have been sent there. I do not mean to speak against them; but I really think that the honourable gentleman will find full employment for all his talents in answering the arguments which are



urged in this House, without employing them in disparaging one of the finest understandings in this kingdom.

And now, Sir, to return to the subject of the negotiation in 1797. It is, in my mind, extremely material to attend to the account which the right honourable gentleman gives of his memorable negotiation of 1797, and of his motives for entering into it. In all questions of peace and war, he says, many circumstances must necessarily enter into the consideration; and that they are not to be decided upon the extremes. The determination must be made upon a balance and comparison of the evils or the advantages upon the one side and the other, and that one of the greatest considerations is that of finance. Now, in 1797, the right honourable gentleman confesses he found himself peculiarly embarrassed as to the resources for the war, if they were to be found in the old and usual way of the funding system. Now, though he thought, upon his balance and comparison of considerations, that the evils of war would be fewer than those of peace, yet they would only be so, provided that he could establish *a new and solid system of finance* in the place of the old and exhausted funding system: and to accomplish this, it was necessary to have the unanimous assent and approbation of the people. To procure this unanimity, he pretended to be a friend to negotiation, though he did not wish for the success of that negotiation, but hoped, only, that through that means he should bring the people to agree to his *new and solid system of finance*. I trust I state the right honourable gentleman fairly. I am sure that I mean to do so. With these views, then, what does he do? Knowing that, contrary to his declarations in this House, the opinion of the people of England was generally for peace, he enters into a negotiation, in which, as the world believed at the time, and even until this day, he completely failed—No such thing, Sir,—he completely succeeded—for his object was not to gain peace; it was to gain over the people of this country to a *new and a solid system of finance*—that is, to the raising a great part of the supplies within the year, to the triple assessment, and to the tax upon income! And how did he gain them over? By pretending to be a friend of peace, which he was not; and by opening a ne-

gotiation, which he secretly wished might not succeed ! The right honourable gentleman says, that in all this he was honest and sincere : he negotiated fairly, and would have obtained the peace, if the French had shewn a disposition correspondent to his own ; but he rejoiced that their conduct was such as to convince the people of England of the necessity of concurring with him in the views which he had, and in granting him the supply which he thought essential to their posture at the time. Sir, I will not say, that in all this he was not honest to his own purpose, and that he has not been honest in his declarations and confessions this night ; but I cannot agree that he was honest to this House, or honest to the people of this country. To this House it was not honest to make them counteract the sense of the people, as he knew it to be expressed in the petitions upon the table ;—nor was it honest to the country, to act in a disguise, and to pursue a secret purpose unknown to them, while affecting to take the road which they pointed out. I know not whether this may not be honesty in the political ethics of the right honourable gentleman ; but I know that it would be called by a very different name in the common transactions of society, and in the rules of morality, established in private life. I know of nothing, in the history of this country, that it resembles, except, perhaps, one of the most profligate periods—the reign of Charles II., when the sale of Dunkirk might probably have been justified by the same pretence. He also declared war against France, and did it to cover a negotiation by which, in his difficulties, he was to gain a *solid system of finance*.

But, Sir, I meet the right honourable gentleman on his own ground. I say that you ought to treat on the same principle on which you treated in 1797, in order to gain the cordial co-operation of the people. We want “experience, and the evidence of facts.” Can there be any evidence of facts equal to that of a frank, open, and candid negotiation ? Let us see whether Bonaparte will display the same temper as his predecessors. If he shall do so, then you will confirm the people of England in their opinion of the necessity of continuing the war, and you will revive all the vigour which you roused in 1797. Or will you not do this until you have a reverse of fortune ? Will you never treat but when you are

in a situation of distress, and when you have occasion to impose on the people?

But, you say, "you have not refused to treat." You have stated a case in which you will be ready immediately to enter into a negotiation, viz. the restoration of the House of Bourbon; but you deny that this is a *sine qua non*; and in your nonsensical language, which I do not understand, you talk of *limited possibilities*, which may induce you to treat without the restoration of the House of Bourbon. But do you state what they are? Now, Sir, I say, that if you put one case, upon which you declare that you are willing to treat immediately, and say that there are other possible cases which may induce you to treat hereafter, without mentioning what these possible cases are, you do state a *sine qua non* of immediate treaty. Suppose that I have an estate to sell, and I say my demand is 1000*l.* for it—I will sell the estate immediately for that sum. To be sure, there may be other terms upon which I may be willing to part with it; but I say nothing of them. The 1000*l.* is the only condition that I state now. Will any gentleman say, that I do not make the 1000*l.* the *sine qua non* of the immediate sale? Thus, you say, the restoration of the Princes is not the only possible ground; but you give no other. This is your *projet*. Do you demand a *contre-projet*? Do you follow your own rule? Do you not do the thing of which you complained in the enemy? You seemed to be afraid of receiving another proposition; and by confining yourselves to this one point, you make it, in fact, though not in terms, your *sine qua non*.

But the right honourable gentleman, in his speech, does what the official note avoids—He finds there the convenient words, "experience and the evidence of facts;"—upon these he goes into detail; and in order to convince the House that new evidence is required, he goes back to all the earliest acts and crimes of the Revolution—to all the atrocities of all the governments that have passed away; and he contends that he must have experience that these foul crimes are repented of, and that a purer and a better system is adopted in France, by which he may be sure that they shall be capable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity. Sir, these are not conciliatory words; nor is this a practicable ground to gain experience,



Does he think it possible, that evidence of a peaceable demeanour can be obtained in war?—What does he mean to say to the French Consul? “Until you shall, in war, behave yourself in a peaceable manner, I will not treat with you.”—Is there not something extremely ridiculous in this? In duels, indeed, we have often heard of this kind of language. Two gentlemen go out, and fight: when, after discharging their pistols at one another, it is not an unusual thing for one of them to say to the other—“Now I am satisfied—I see that you are a man of honour, and we are friends again.” There is something, by the by, ridiculous even in this; but, between nations, it is more than ridiculous—it is criminal. It is a ground which no principle can justify, and which is as impracticable as it is impious. That two nations should be set on to beat one another into friendship, is too abominable even for the fiction of romance; but for a Statesman, seriously and gravely, to lay it down as a system upon which he means to act, is monstrous. What can we say of such a test as he means to put the French Government to, but that it is hopeless? It is in the nature of war, to inflame animosity—to exasperate, not to soothe—to widen, not to approximate.—And so long as this is to be acted upon, I say, it is vain to hope that we can have the evidence which we require.

The right honourable gentleman, however, thinks otherwise; and he points out four distinct possible cases, besides the re-establishment of the Bourbon Family, in which he would agree to treat with the French.

1. “If Bonaparte shall conduct himself so as to convince him that he has abandoned the principles which were objectionable in his predecessors, and that he shall be actuated by a more moderate system.” I ask you, Sir, if this is likely to be ascertained in war? It is the nature of war, not to allay, but to inflame the passions; and it is not by the invective and abuse which have been thrown upon him and his government, nor by the continued irritations which war is sure to give, that the virtues of moderation and forbearance are to be nourished.

2. “If, contrary to the expectations of Ministers, the people of France shall shew a disposition to acquiesce in the

Government of Bonaparte." Does the right honourable gentleman mean to say, that because it is an usurpation on the part of the present Chief, that therefore the people are not likely to acquiesce in it? I have not time, Sir, to discuss the question of this usurpation, or whether it is likely to be permanent; but I certainly have not so good an opinion of the French, or of any people, as to believe that it will be short-lived, *merely* because it was an usurpation, and because it is a system of military despotism. Cromwell was an usurper; and in many points there may be found a resemblance between him and the present Chief Consul of France. There is no doubt but that, on several occasions of his life, Cromwell's sincerity may be questioned, particularly in his self-denying ordinance—in his affected piety, and other things; but would it not have been insanity in France and Spain to refuse to treat with him, because he was an usurper?—No, Sir, these are not the maxims by which governments are actuated. They do not inquire so much into the means by which power may have been acquired, as into the fact of where the power resides. The people did acquiesce in the government of Cromwell: but it may be said that the splendour of his talents, the vigour of his administration, the high tone with which he spoke to foreign nations, the success of his arms, and the character which he gave to the English name, induced the nation to acquiesce in his usurpation; and that we must not try Bonaparte by this example. Will it be said that Bonaparte is not a man of great abilities? Will it be said that he has not, by his victories, thrown a splendour over even the violence of the Revolution, and that he does not conciliate the French people by the high and lofty tone in which he speaks to foreign nations? Are not the French, then, as likely, as the English in the case of Cromwell, to acquiesce in his government? If they should do so, the right honourable gentleman may find that this possible predicament may fail him. He may find, that though one power may make war, it requires two to make peace. He may find that Bonaparte was as insincere as himself, in the proposition which he made; and in his turn he may come forward and say—  
 " I have no occasion now for concealment. It is true, that in the beginning of the year 1800, I offered to treat, not

because I wished for peace, but because the people of France wished for it ; and besides, my old resources being exhausted, and there being no means of carrying on the war without a new and solid system of finance, I pretended to treat, because I wished to procure the unanimous assent of the French people to this *new and solid system of finance*. Did you think I was in earnest ? You were deceived. I now throw off the mask : I have gained my point ; and I reject your offers with scorn." Is it not a very possible case that he may use this language ? Is it not within the right honourable gentleman's *knowledge of human nature* ? But even if this should not be the case, will not the very test which you require—the acquiescence of the people of France in his Government—give him an advantage-ground in the negotiation which he does not possess now ? Is it quite sure, that when he finds himself safe in his seat, he will treat on the same terms as now, and that you will get a better peace some time hence, than you might reasonably hope to obtain at this moment ? Will he not have one interest less than at present ? and do you not overlook a favourable occasion, for a chance which is extremely doubtful ? These are the considerations which I would urge to His Majesty's Ministers, against the dangerous experiment of waiting for the acquiescence of the people of France.

3. " If the allies of this country shall be less successful than they have every reason to expect they will be, in stirring up the people of France against Bonaparte, and in the farther prosecution of the war." And,

4. " If the pressure of the war should be heavier upon us, than it would be convenient for us to continue to bear."—These are the other two possible emergencies in which the right honourable gentleman would treat even with Bonaparte. Sir, I have often blamed the right honourable gentleman for being disingenuous and insincere. On the present occasion I certainly cannot charge him with any such thing. He has made to-night a most honest confession ; he is open and candid. He tells Bonaparte fairly what he has to expect. " I mean," says he, " to do every thing in my power to raise up the people of France against you—I have engaged a number of allies, and our combined efforts shall be used to excite insurrection and civil war in France—I will strive to murder you, or to



get you sent away. If I succeed, well; but if I fail, then I will treat with you. My resources being exhausted; even my solid system of finance having failed to supply me with the means of keeping together my allies, and of feeding the discontents I have excited in France—then you may expect to see me renounce my high tone—my attachment to the House of Bourbon—my abhorrence of your crimes—my alarm at your principles; for then I shall be ready to own, that, on the balance and comparison of circumstances, there will be less danger in concluding a peace, than in the continuance of war!" Is this a political language for one state to hold to another? And what sort of peace does the right honourable gentleman expect to receive in that case? Does he think that Bonaparte would grant, to baffled insolence—to humiliated pride—to disappointment and to imbecility, the same terms which he would be ready to give now? The right honourable gentleman cannot have forgot what he said on another occasion,

" ————— Potuit quæ plurima virtus  
 " Esse fuit, toto certatum est corpore regni."

He would then have to repeat his words, but with a different application—He would have to say, that all our efforts are vain—we have exhausted our strength—our designs are impracticable—and we must sue to you for peace.

Sir, what is the question to-night? We are called upon to support Ministers in refusing a frank, candid and respectful offer of negotiation, and to countenance them in continuing the war. Now, I would put the question in another way. Suppose that Ministers had been inclined to adopt the line of conduct which they pursued in 1796 and 1797, and that to-night, instead of a question on a war address, it had been an address to His Majesty, to thank him for accepting the overture, and for opening a negotiation to treat for peace: I ask the gentlemen opposite—I appeal to the whole 558 representatives of the people—to lay their hands upon their hearts, and to say, whether they would not have cordially voted for such an address? Would they, or would they not? Yes, Sir, if the address had breathed a spirit of peace, your benches would have resounded with rejoicings, and with praises of a measure

that was likely to bring back the blessings of tranquillity. On the present occasion, then, I ask for the vote of no gentlemen but of those who, in the secret confession of their conscience, admit, at this instant, while they hear me, that they would have cheerfully and heartily voted with the Minister for an address directly the reverse of this. If any such gentleman should vote with me, I should be this night in the greatest majority that ever I had the honour to vote with in this House. I do not know that the right honourable gentleman would find, even on the benches around him, a single individual who would not vote with me—I am sure he would not find many—I do not know that in this House I could single out the individual, who would think himself bound by consistency to vote against the right honourable gentleman, on an address for negotiation. There may be some, but they are very few. I do know, indeed, one most honourable man in another place (whose purity and integrity I respect, though I lament the opinion he has formed on this subject), who would think himself bound, from the uniform consistency of his life, to vote against an address for negotiation. Earl Fitzwilliam would, I verily believe, do so. He would feel himself bound, from the previous votes he has given, to declare his objection to all treaty: but I own I do not know more in either House of Parliament—there may be others, but I do not know them. Why then, what is the House of Commons come to, when, notwithstanding their support given to the right honourable gentleman in 1796 and 1797, on his entering into negotiation; notwithstanding their inward conviction, that they would vote with him now for the same measure—what are we to think of the character of that House of Commons, who, after supporting the Minister in his negotiation for a solid system of finance, can now bring themselves to countenance his abandonment of the ground he took, and to support him in refusing all negotiation! What will be said of gentlemen who shall vote in this way, and yet feel, in their consciences, that they would have, with infinitely more readiness, voted the other?

Sir, we have heard to-night a great many most acrimonious invectives against Bonaparte, against all the course of his conduct, and against the unprincipled manner in which

he seized upon the reins of government: I will not make his defence—I think all this sort of invective, which is used only to inflame the passions of this House and of the country, exceedingly ill-timed, and very impolitic—but I say I will not make his defence. I am not sufficiently in possession of materials upon which to form an opinion on the character and conduct of this extraordinary man. On his arrival in France, he found the Government in a very unsettled state, and the whole affairs of the Republic deranged, crippled, and involved. He thought it necessary to reform the Government; and he did reform it, just in the way in which a military man may be expected to carry on a reform—he seized on the whole authority to himself. It will not be expected from me, that I should either approve or apologize for such an act. I am certainly not for reforming governments by such expedients; but how this House can be so violently indignant at the idea of military despotism, is, I own, a little singular, when I see the composure with which they can observe it nearer home; nay, when I see them regard it as a frame of government most peculiarly suited to the exercise of free opinion, on a subject the most important of any that can engage the attention of a people. Was it not the system which was so happily and so advantageously established of late, all over Ireland; and which, even now, the Government may, at its pleasure, proclaim over the whole of that kingdom? Are not the persons and property of the people left, in many districts, at this moment, to the entire will of military commanders? and is not this held out as peculiarly proper and advantageous, at a time when the people of Ireland are freely, and with unbiassed judgments, to discuss the most interesting question of a Legislative Union? Notwithstanding the existence of martial law, so far do we think Ireland from being enslaved, that we think it precisely the period and the circumstances under which she may best declare her free opinion! Now, really, Sir, I cannot think that gentlemen, who talk in this way about Ireland, can, with a good grace, rail at military despotism in France.

But, it seems, “Bonaparte has broken his oaths. He has violated his oath of fidelity to the Constitution of the year 3.” Sir, I am not one of those who think that any such oaths



ought ever to be exacted. They are seldom or ever of any effect; and I am not for sporting with a thing so sacred as an oath. I think it would be good to lay aside all such oaths. Who ever heard, that, in revolutions, the oath of fidelity to the former Government was ever regarded; or, even when violated, that it was imputed to the persons as a crime? In times of revolution, men who take up arms are called rebels—If they fail, they are adjudged to be traitors. But who, before, ever heard of their being perjured? On the restoration of King Charles II., those who had taken up arms for the Commonwealth, were stigmatized as rebels and traitors, but not as men foresworn. Was the Earl of Devonshire charged with being perjured, on account of the allegiance he had sworn to the House of Stuart, and the part he took in those struggles which preceded and brought about the Revolution? The violation of oaths of allegiance was never imputed to the people of England, and will never be imputed to any people. But who brings up the question of oaths? He who strives to make twenty-four millions of persons violate the oaths they have taken to their present Constitution, and who desires to re-establish the House of Bourbon by such violation of their vows. I put it so, Sir; because, if the question of oaths be of the least consequence, it is equal on both sides. He who desires the whole people of France to perjure themselves, and who hopes for success in his project only upon their doing so, surely cannot make it a charge against Bonaparte that he has done the same.

“Ah! but Bonaparte has declared it as his opinion, that the two Governments of Great Britain and of France cannot exist together. After the treaty of Campo Formio, he sent two confidential persons, Berthier and Monge, to the Directory, to say so in his name.” Well, and what is there in this absurd and puerile assertion, if it was ever made? Has not the right honourable gentleman, in this House, said the same thing? In this, at least, they resemble one another. They have both made use of this assertion; and I believe, that these two illustrious persons are the only two on earth who think it. But let us turn the tables. We ought to put ourselves at times in the place of the enemy, if we are desirous of really examining with candour and fairness the dispute be-

tween us. How may they not interpret the speeches of Ministers, and their friends, in both Houses of the British Parliament? If we are to be told of the idle speech of Berthier and Monge, may they not also bring up speeches, in which it has not been merely hinted, but broadly asserted, that "the two Constitutions of England and France could not exist together?" May not these offences and charges be reciprocated without end? Are we ever to go on in this miserable squabble about words? Are we still, as we happen to be successful on the one side or other, to bring up these impotent accusations, insults, and provocations, against each other; and only when we are beaten and unfortunate, to think of treating? Oh! pity the condition of man, gracious God! and save us from such a system of malevolence, in which all our old and venerated prejudices are to be done away, and by which we are to be taught to consider war as the natural state of man, and peace but as a dangerous and difficult extremity!

Sir, this temper must be corrected. It is a diabolical spirit, and would lead to an interminable war. Our history is full of instances, that where we have overlooked a proffered occasion to treat, we have uniformly suffered by delay. At what time did we ever profit by obstinately persevering in war? We accepted at Ryswick the terms we had refused for years before, and the same peace which was concluded at Utrecht might have been obtained at Gertrudenberg. And as to security, from the future machinations or ambition of the French, I ask you, what security you ever had, or could have? Did the different treaties made with Louis XIV. serve to tie up his hands—to restrain his ambition, or to stifle his restless spirit? At what time, in old or in recent periods, could you safely repose on the honour, forbearance and moderation of the French Government? Was there ever an idea of refusing to treat, because the peace might be afterwards insecure? The peace of 1763 was not accompanied with securities; and it was no sooner made, than the French Court began, as usual, its intrigues. And what security did the right honourable gentleman exact at the peace of 1783, in which he was engaged? Were we rendered secure by that peace? The right honourable gentleman knows well, that soon after that peace, the

French formed a plan, in conjunction with the Dutch, of attacking our India possessions, of raising up the native powers against us, and of driving us out of India; as the French were desirous of doing now—only with this difference, that the Cabinet of France entered into this project in a moment of profound peace, and when they conceived us to be lulled into a perfect security. After making the peace of 1783, the right honourable gentleman and his friends went out, and I, among others, came into office. Suppose, Sir, that we had taken up the jealousy upon which the right honourable gentleman now acts, and had refused to ratify the peace which he had made—Suppose that we had said—No; France is acting a perfidious part—we see no security for England in this treaty—they want only a respite, in order to attack us again in an important part of our dominions; and we ought not to confirm the treaty. I ask you—would the right honourable gentleman have supported us in this refusal? I say, that upon his present reasoning he ought; but I put it fairly to him, would he have supported us in refusing to ratify the treaty upon such a pretence? He certainly ought not, and I am sure he would not; but the course of reasoning which he now assumes, would have justified his taking such a ground. On the contrary, I am persuaded that he would have said—“This is a refinement upon jealousy.—Security! You have security, the only security that you can ever expect to get. It is the present interest of France to make peace. She will keep it if it be her interest—She will break it if it be her interest. Such is the state of nations; and you have nothing but your own vigilance for your security.”

“It is not the interest of Bonaparte, it seems, sincerely to enter into a negotiation, or, if he should even make peace, sincerely to keep it.” But how are we to decide upon his sincerity? By refusing to treat with him? Surely, if we mean to discover his sincerity, we ought to hear the propositions which he desires to make. “But peace would be unfriendly to his system of military despotism.” Sir, I hear a great deal about the short-lived nature of military despotism. I wish the history of the world would bear gentlemen out in this description of military despotism. Was not the Government erected by Augustus Cæsar a military despotism? And yet



it endured for 600 or 700 years. Military despotism, unfortunately, is too likely in its nature to be permanent, and it is not true that it depends on the life of the first usurper. Though half of the Roman Emperors were murdered, yet the military despotism went on; and so it would be, I fear, in France. If Bonaparte should disappear from the scene, to make room, perhaps, for a Berthier, or any other General, what difference would that make in the quality of French despotism, or in our relation to the country? We may as safely treat with a Bonaparte, or with any of his successors, be they whom they may, as we could with a Louis XVI. a Louis XVII. or a Louis XVIII.—There is no difference but in the name. Where the power essentially resides, thither we ought to go for peace.

But, Sir, if we are to reason on the fact, I should think that it is the interest of Bonaparte to make peace. A lover of military glory, as that General must necessarily be, may he not think that his measure of glory is full—that it may be tarnished by a reverse of fortune, and can hardly be increased by any new laurels? He must feel, that, in the situation to which he is now raised, he can no longer depend on his own fortune, his own genius, and his own talents, for a continuance of his success; he must be under the necessity of employing other Generals, whose misconduct or incapacity might endanger his power, or whose triumphs even might affect the interest which he holds in the opinion of the French. Peace, then, would secure to him what he has achieved, and fix the inconstancy of fortune. But this will not be his only motive. He must see that France also requires a respite—a breathing interval, to recruit her wasted strength. To procure her this respite, would be, perhaps, the attainment of more solid glory, as well as the means of acquiring more solid power, than any thing which he can hope to gain from arms, and from the proudest triumphs. May he not then be zealous to gain this fame, the only species of fame, perhaps, that is worth acquiring? Nay, granting that his soul may still burn with the thirst of military exploits, is it not likely that he is disposed to yield to the feelings of the French people, and to consolidate his power by consulting their interests? I have a right to argue in this way, when suppositions of his insincerity

are reasoned upon on the other side. Sir, these aspersions are in truth always idle, and even mischievous. I have been too long accustomed to hear imputations and calumnies thrown out upon great and honourable characters, to be much influenced by them. My honourable and learned friend (Mr. Erskine) has paid this night a most just, deserved and honourable tribute of applause, to the memory of that great and unparalleled character, who is so recently lost to the world. I must, like him, beg leave to dwell a moment on the venerable George Washington, though I know that it is impossible for me to bestow any thing like adequate praise on a character which gave us, more than any other human being, the example of a perfect man ; yet, good, great and unexampled as General Washington was, I can remember the time when he was not better spoken of in this House than Bonaparte is now. The right honourable gentleman who opened this debate (Mr. Dundas) may remember in what terms of disdain, of virulence, even of contempt, General Washington was spoken of by gentlemen on that side of the House. Does he not recollect with what marks of indignation any Member was stigmatized as an enemy to his country, who mentioned with common respect the name of General Washington ? If a negotiation had then been proposed to be opened with that great man, what would have been said ? Would you treat with a Rebel, a Traitor ! What an example would you not give by such an act ! I do not know whether the right honourable gentleman may not yet possess some of his old prejudices on the subject. I hope not : I hope by this time we are all convinced that a Republican Government, like that of America, may exist without danger or injury to social order, or to established Monarchies. They have happily shewn that they can maintain the relations of peace and amity with other States : they have shewn, too, that they are alive to the feelings of honour ; but they do not lose sight of plain good sense and discretion. They have not refused to negotiate with the French, and they have accordingly the hopes of a speedy termination of every difference. We cry up their conduct, but we do not imitate it. At the beginning of the struggle, we were told that the French were setting up a set of wild and impracticable theories, and that we ought not to be misled by

them—we could not grapple with theories. Now we are told that we must not treat, because, out of the Lottery, Bonaparte has drawn such a prize as military despotism. Is military despotism a theory? One would think that that is one of the practical things which Ministers might understand, and to which they would have no particular objection. But what is our present conduct founded on but a theory, and that a most wild and ridiculous theory? What are we fighting for? Not for a principle; not for security; not for conquest even; but merely for an experiment and a speculation, to discover whether a gentleman at Paris may not turn out a better man than we now take him to be.

My honourable friend (Mr. Whitbread) has been censured for an opinion which he gave, and I think justly, that the change of property in France since the Revolution must form an almost insurmountable barrier to the return of the antient proprietors. “No such thing,” says the right honourable gentleman; “nothing can be more easy. Property is depreciated to such a rate, that the purchasers would easily be brought to restore the estates.” I very much differ with him in this idea. It is the character of every such convulsion as that which has ravaged France, that an infinite and undescribable load of misery is inflicted upon private families. The heart sickens at the recital of the sorrows which it engenders.—No revolution implied, though it may have occasioned, a total change of property—The restoration of the Bourbons does imply it; and there is the difference. There is no doubt but that if the noble families had foreseen the duration and the extent of the evils which were to fall upon their heads, they would have taken a very different line of conduct. But they unfortunately flew from their country. The King and his advisers sought foreign aid. A confederacy was formed to restore them by military force; and as a means of resisting this combination, the estates of the fugitives were confiscated and sold. However compassion may deplore the case, it cannot be said that the thing is unprecedented. The people have always resorted to such means of defence. Now the question is, how this property is to be got out of their hands? If it be true, as I have heard it said, the purchasers of national and forfeited estates amount to



1,500,000 persons—I say, if this be so, I see no hopes of their being forced to deliver up their property; nor do I even know that they ought. I do not know whether it would be the means of restoring tranquillity and order to a country, to attempt to divest a body of one million and a half of inhabitants, in order to reinstate a much smaller body. I question the policy, even if the thing were practicable; but I assert, that such a body of new proprietors forms an insurmountable barrier to the restoration of the ancient order of things. Never was a revolution consolidated by a pledge so strong.

But, as if this were not of itself sufficient, Louis XVIII. from his retirement at Mittau, puts forth a manifesto, in which he assures the friends of his house, that he is about to come back with all the powers that formerly belonged to his family. He does not promise to the people a Constitution which might tend to conciliate their hearts; but, stating, that he is to come with all the *ancien regime*, they would naturally attach to it its proper appendages of Bastiles, Lettres de Cachet, Gabelle, &c. And the Noblesse, for whom this proclamation was peculiarly conceived, would also naturally feel, that if the Monarch was to be restored to all his privileges, they surely were to be reinstated in their estates without a compensation to the purchasers. Is this likely to make the people wish for the restoration of royalty? I have no doubt but there may be a number of Chouans in France, though I am persuaded that little dependence is to be placed on their efforts. There may be a number of people dispersed over France, and particularly in certain provinces, who may retain a degree of attachment to royalty: and how the Government will contrive to compromise with that spirit, I know not. I suspect, however, that Bonaparte will try: his efforts have been turned to that object; and, if we may believe report, he has succeeded to a considerable degree. He will naturally call to his recollection the precedent which the history of France itself will furnish. The once formidable insurrection of the Hugonots was completely stifled, and the party conciliated, by the policy of Henry IV. who gave them such privileges, and raised them so high in the Government, as to make some persons apprehend danger therefrom to the unity of the empire. Nor will the French be likely to forget

the revocation of the edict—one of the memorable acts of the House of Bourbon—an act which was never surpassed in atrocity, injustice, and impolicy, by any thing that has disgraced Jacobinism. If Bonaparte shall attempt some similar arrangement to that of Henry IV. with the Chouans, who will say that he is likely to fail? He will meet with no great obstacle to success from the influence which our Ministers have established with the Chiefs, or in the attachment and dependence which they have on our protection; for what has the right honourable gentleman told him, in stating the contingencies in which he will treat with Bonaparte? He will excite a rebellion in France—He will give support to the Chouans, if they can stand their ground; but he will not make common cause with them: for unless they can depose Bonaparte, send him into banishment, or execute him, he will abandon the Chouans, and treat with this very man, whom, at the same time, he describes as holding the reins and wielding the powers of France for purposes of unexampled barbarity.

Sir, I wish the atrocities of which we hear so much, and which I abhor as much as any man, were, indeed, unexampled. I fear that they do not belong exclusively to the French. When the right honourable gentleman speaks of the extraordinary successes of the last campaign, he does not mention the horrors by which some of these successes were accompanied. Naples, for instance, has been, among others, what is called *delivered*; and yet, if I am rightly informed, it has been stained and polluted by murders so ferocious, and by cruelties of every kind so abhorrent, that the heart shudders at the recital. It has been said, not only that the miserable victims of the rage and brutality of the fanatics were savagely murdered, but that, in many instances, their flesh was eaten and devoured by the Cannibals, who are the advocates and the instruments of social order! Nay, England is not totally exempt from reproach, if the rumours which are circulated be true. I will mention a fact, to give Ministers the opportunity, if it be false, to wipe away the stain that it must otherwise affix on the British name. It is said, that a party of the Republican inhabitants of Naples took shelter in the fortress of the Castel de Uova. They were besieged by a detachment

from the royal army, to whom they refused to surrender; but demanded that a British officer should be brought forward, and to him they capitulated. They made terms with him under the sanction of the British name. It was agreed, that their persons and property should be safe, and that they should be conveyed to Toulon. They were accordingly put on board a vessel; but before they sailed, their property was confiscated, numbers of them taken out, thrown into dungeons, and some of them, I understand, notwithstanding the British guarantee, actually executed!

Where then, Sir, is this war, which on every side is pregnant with such horrors, to be carried? Where is it to stop? Not till you establish the House of Bourbon! And this you cherish the hope of doing, because you have had a successful campaign. Why, Sir, before this you have had a successful campaign. The situation of the allies, with all they have gained, is surely not to be compared now to what it was when you had taken Valenciennes, Quesnoy, Condé, &c. which induced some gentlemen in this House to prepare themselves for a march to Paris. With all that you have gained, you surely will not say that the prospect is brighter now than it was then. What have you gained but the recovery of a part of what you before lost? One campaign is successful to you—another to them; and in this way, animated by the vindictive passions of revenge, hatred, and rancour, which are infinitely more flagitious, even, than those of ambition and the thirst of power, you may go on for ever; as, with such black incentives, I see no end to human misery.

And all this without an intelligible motive—all this because you may gain a better peace a year or two hence! So that we are called upon to go on merely as a speculation—We must keep Bonaparte for some time longer at war, as a state of probation. Gracious God, Sir! is war a state of probation? Is peace a rash system? Is it dangerous for nations to live in amity with each other? Is your vigilance, your policy, your common powers of observation, to be extinguished by putting an end to the horrors of war? Cannot this state of probation be as well undergone without adding to the catalogue of human sufferings? “But we must *pause!*” What! must the bowels of Great Britain be torn out—her best blood



be spilt—her treasure wasted—that you may make an experiment? Put yourselves, oh! that you would put yourselves in the field of battle, and learn to judge of the sort of horrors that you excite. In former wars a man might, at least, have some feeling, some interest, that served to balance in his mind the impressions which a scene of carnage and of death must inflict. If a man had been present at the battle of Blenheim, for instance, and had inquired the motive of the battle, there was not a soldier engaged who could not have satisfied his curiosity, and even, perhaps, allayed his feelings—they were fighting to repress the uncontrouled ambition of the Grand Monarque—But if a man were present now at a field of slaughter, and were to inquire for what they were fighting—“ Fighting!” would be the answer; “ they are not fighting, they are *pausing*.” “ Why is that man expiring? Why is that other writhing with agony? What means this implacable fury?” The answer must be, “ You are quite wrong—Sir, you deceive yourself—They are not fighting—Do not disturb them—they are merely *pausing*!—this man is not expiring with agony—that man is not dead—he is only pausing! Lord help you, Sir! they are not angry with one another; they have now no cause of quarrel—but their country thinks that there should be a pause. All that you see, Sir, is nothing like fighting—there is no harm, nor cruelty, nor bloodshed in it whatever—it is nothing more than a *political pause*!—it is merely to try an experiment—to see whether Bonaparte will not behave himself better than heretofore; and in the mean time we have agreed to a pause, in pure friendship!” And is this the way, Sir, that you are to shew yourselves the advocates of order? You take up a system calculated to uncivilize the world—to destroy order—to trample on religion—to stifle in the heart, not merely the generosity of noble sentiment, but the affections of social nature; and in the prosecution of this system, you spread terror and devastation all around you.

Sir, I have done. I have told you my opinion. I think you ought to have given a civil, clear and explicit answer to the overture which was fairly and handsomely made you. If you were desirous that the negotiation should have included all your allies, as the means of bringing about a general peace,

you should have told Bonaparte so ; but I believe you were afraid of his agreeing to the proposal. You took that method before. Aye, but you say the people were anxious for peace in 1797. I say they are friends to peace now ; and I am confident that you will one day own it.—Believe me, they are friends to peace ; although, by the laws which you have made, restraining the expression of the sense of the people, public opinion cannot now be heard as loudly and unequivocally as heretofore.—But I will not go into the internal state of this country. It is too afflicting to the heart to see the strides which have been made by means of, and under the miserable pretext of this war, against liberty of every kind, both of power of speech and of writing ; and to observe in another kingdom the rapid approaches to that military despotism which we affect to make an argument against peace. I know, Sir, that public opinion, if it could be collected, would be for peace, as much now as in 1797 : and I know that it is only by public opinion—not by a sense of their duty—not by the inclination of their minds, that Ministers will be brought, if ever, to give us peace.

I conclude, Sir, with repeating what I said before : I ask for no gentleman's vote who would have reprobated the compliance of Ministers with the proposition of the French Government ; I ask for no gentleman's support to-night who would have voted against Ministers, if they had come down and proposed to enter into a negotiation with the French : But I have a right to ask—I know, that in honour, in consistency, in conscience, I have a right to expect, the vote of every honourable gentleman who would have voted with Ministers in an Address to His Majesty, diametrically opposite to the motion of this night.

*No answer was made to this speech.*

The House divided,

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| Ayes, for the Address against Negotiation, 260 |    |
| Noes, - - - - -                                | 64 |

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FINIS.

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